

March 2005



MONTANA GEAR UP

GAINING EARLY AWARENESS & READINESS FOR
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education / Montana University System



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Director's Message: by Sandy Merdinger

It seems like it was just last week I was writing an article for the February newsletter! The month has flown by as we prepare our application for the new grant. The official application came out February 23rd with a due date of April 11th. We still have much to do and welcome the additional week that was added to the submission deadline since the draft application was released. We are working on various sections of the grant while going through the process of selecting schools for the new grant. Letters of invitation were sent in mid-February to 64 qualifying schools. Schools that responded expressing an interest in participating in GEAR UP were sent a survey to gain additional information. The survey will assist us in determining which schools will be best served by receiving GEAR UP funding and services in a new grant. We anticipate selecting 24 to 30 schools for this grant, depending on school size, as we must build the scholarship component based on number of students served.

You may have heard that the President's budget submitted to Congress eliminates funding for the GEAR UP program. Although the President has recommended zeroing out funding for GEAR UP in his budget, I remain optimistic that GEAR UP will continue, which is why we proceed in writing for a

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Scott Flat Lip, one of the original GEAR

Pathways Recipient Wins Again!:

UP Pathways Scholarship recipients, and his hip hop gospel band "Rezawrecktion" recently took the seventh annual NAMMY awards by storm and came home toting the award for producing the best gospel/Christian recording album of the year, "On Time!" The NAMMYS are the Native American Music Awards Show and, according to the band, are like a mini version of the Grammys. This year's NAMMYS were held at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood, Florida. The band had to travel to the awards show on loans and donations from family and friends. When they returned, they were met by a large crowd of cheering fans at the Billings airport. The band's music, which can be heard coming from the GEAR UP director's computer speakers some Friday afternoons, is described as "influential, motivating and inspirational."

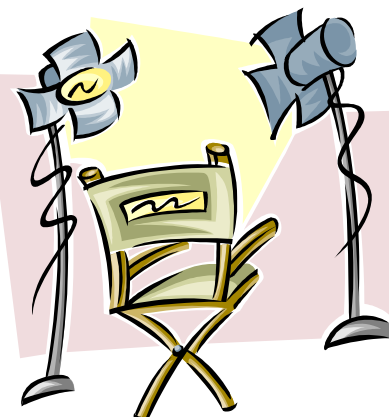


Rezawrecktion is working on their second album, due out this spring, and a tour schedule which will include the Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque and the Denver March Powwow. To learn more about the band, find tour dates, or to order a copy of their CD, visit their website:

www.rezawrecktion.com.

The GEAR UP Spotlight: Bloomfield School

Bloomfield School is now offering Pre-AP classes online to students with technology provided through GEAR UP. Pre-AP classes are based on two important concepts: (1) As teachers, we need to expect that all students can perform at rigorous academic levels; and (2) we can prepare every student for higher intellectual engagement by starting the development of skills and acquisition of knowledge as early as possible. OPI presently is providing a grant for eligible schools that covers the cost of Pre-AP and AP classes through Apex Learning (www.apexvs.com). The courses are a powerful tool to help students acquire the knowledge, concepts, and skills needed to engage in a higher level of learning.



Bloomfield student Caroline Greiman is shown here working on her online English/Literature. Caroline says, "One of the things I have learned (the hard way) is that it is important to build relationships with your teachers even when they are online! I think my Pre-AP classes are challenging, but they are preparing me more for college than any of my other classes. Poetry is really an area of interest to me so I am really looking forward to my upcoming unit on Edgar Allan Poe. Sometimes my online classmates are fun too".

Capacity Building Workshop Report:

Montana GEAR UP's team for the NCCEP/ GEAR UP Capacity-Building Workshop in Philadelphia consisted of Sandy Merdinger, director; Annette Walstad, program manager; Tina Wagner, MGSLP outreach coordinator; and Punky Bullis, GEAR UP liaison from Hardin. The 2½ day Capacity-Building workshop focused on parental involvement strategies to enhance student educational success. The workshop was presented by David Valladolid and Patricia Mayer from the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQE).

The PIQE program is based on the philosophy that:

- All parents love their children and want a better future for them;
- Every child can learn and deserves the opportunity to attend and complete a college education;
- Parents and teachers need to work together to ensure the educational success of every child; and
- For children, learning is a natural process that parents and teachers facilitate.

The objectives of the Parent Institute are to encourage and support low-income, ethnically-diverse parents of elementary, middle and high school children to take a participatory role in assisting their children to:

- Create a home learning environment;
- Navigate the school system;
- Collaborate with teachers, counselors and principals;
- Encourage college attendance; and
- Support a child's emotional and social development.

The PIQE program is offered throughout California to the parents of middle and high school parents. The course is offered in morning sessions and repeated in the evening with parents choosing when they can come. It is taught by credentialed teachers who are trained by PIQE.

For more information about the PIQE program go to: www.piqe.org or contact Annette Walstad at awalstad@oche.montana.edu or (406) 444-0598.

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new grant. The President's budget is a recommendation to Congress, but Congress will ultimately decide the future of GEAR UP in the appropriations process which will most likely occur in late summer or sometime in the fall. GEAR UP has strong supporters from both parties, and as long they continue to realize the benefits of GEAR UP to students, I am confident funding will continue. Regardless, GEAR UP is forward funded which means that the Department of Education will award new grants this summer for the next school year since the funding is already available. As you have the opportunity, let the Montana delegation know what impact GEAR UP has had on your schools and students.

Here in the office we are also working on the Annual Performance Report for the Department of Education. Kelly Hert, our federal accountant, brought to my attention (again!) that schools continue to do an outstanding job of providing match for the grant. For last year, schools submitted \$181,665 more match than dollars received!!! Thank you so much for this help, which goes toward match for scholarships for our students.

We will keep you posted on the progress of the grant. Feel free to contact us with any suggestions or questions you might have.

The numbers are in, and we are close to our goal of serving 1,000 students and parents. A total of **College Goal Sunday Report:** 766 students and parents and 216 volunteers participated in College Goal Sunday on February 13, 2005, for a total of 982 participants and volunteers. The busiest site was MSU-Great Falls College of Technology with 170 participants. The smallest site was Salish Kootenai College with 14 participants.

We would like to extend our thanks for your support of Montana's first College Goal Sunday. Thank you for sharing the information with your students and encouraging your seniors to attend. Many GEAR UP students participated statewide. Several GEAR UP liaisons and counselors volunteered at College Goal Sunday sites as well.

Mark your calendars for February 12, 2006. We look forward to seeing you next year!

March Reminders:

- The deadline for students to submit their essays for the MGSLP Essay Contest is March 1.
- The National Youth Leadership Summit will be held July 16-20 in San Francisco in conjunction with the national GEAR UP conference. Student applications are due March 1, 2005. For more information visit www.edpartnerships.org.
- GEAR UP Pathways Scholarship application deadline is March 11.
- The deadline for entries in the assessment website is March 14.
- The Montana Indian Education Association's 24th Annual conference is April 2-5 at the Red Lion Colonial Inn in Helena. For information and registration go to www.miea.org.
- The Montana School Counselors Association's Spring Institute is April 14-15 at the Holiday Inn in Bozeman. For information contact Joan Wycoff at (406) 285-6830 or yodano66@hotmail.com.
- Please let us know if someone would like to be added to the newsletter distribution list.
- This newsletter is also available online by visiting www.gearup.montana.edu.
- Summer program opportunities will be announced in the April newsletter.
- Spotlight articles for April's newsletter are due by March 20, and can be sent to cmalkin@oche.montana.edu

TRANSITION PLANNING FOR SENIORS

According to Webster's Dictionary, a **transition** is **a** : passage from one state, stage, subject, or place to another; **b** : a movement, development, or evolution from one form, stage, or style to another. That pretty well describes what our seniors are going through as they conclude their high school careers and look forward to the future after graduation. We have been working with our students to prepare them for this 'passage' and we certainly hope they are able to make a 'movement, development, or evolution' to somewhere other than the living room couch. But are they ready for college? And if they are not, what can we do in their last three months of high school?

Transition planning information for seniors is plentiful (but somewhat overwhelming) and can be broken into three main categories: 1) Academic Preparation/College Readiness; 2) Personal Adjustment and Responsibility; and 3) Paperwork/Logistics. The following is a sample of the types of topics your students should be aware of in each category before they head off to college (or whatever they do post-high school), and some websites with helpful learning tools.

Academic Preparation/College Readiness: Topics in this area include the difference between 'attending' high school and 'succeeding' at college; study skills; note-taking; test taking strategies; how to use a college catalog/website; understanding college terms and timelines; and how personality type and learning styles impact college success. Websites include:

- www.learnmoreindiana.org (good general site)
- www.smu.edu/alec/whyhighschool.html (differences between HS and college)
- www.vark-learn.com (discovering learning styles)
- www.pathwaystocollege.net (check out the publications and resources button)
- www.act.org/path/secondary/resources.html (info for first generation college students & their parents)

Personal Adjustment and Responsibility: Topics in this area include goal setting; motivation; roommate issues; homesickness/loneliness; time management; budgeting; health and wellness; and communication skills. Websites include:

- www.rwuniversity.com (time management, budgeting, health, etc.)
- www.collegeprep.okstate.edu (click on the 'At College' button)
- www.nextstepmagazine.com (click on 'Students' and then on 'articles for students')

Paperwork and Logistics: Topics in this area include college selection and application; financial aid; scholarships; test requirements; timelines/deadlines; orientation; scheduling classes; and getting to campus. Websites include:

- www.montanacolleges.com (info about Montana colleges, college planning, links to other sites, etc.)
- www.safmt.org (financial aid, access to MCIS)
- www.act.org (college planning, test taking, etc.)
- www.collegeboard.org (college planning, test taking, etc.)

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Montana Guaranteed Student Loan
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National GEAR UP website:
www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/